



Testimony in Support of SB 753
An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining
Legislative Districts

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Grayson Phillips. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut SB 753, *An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining Legislative Districts*.

Prison gerrymandering is fundamentally detrimental to the integrity of the representative process. Counting prisoners as a resident of the district in which they are incarcerated primarily serves to restrict the representation of their actual communities in the state legislature, while simultaneously and artificially inflating the political power held by the actual inhabitants of their new “district”. To use prison populations to increase the influence of a region would be almost risible were it not so appalling. Incarceration should serve as a rehabilitative process, not an exploitative one.

Stopping the practice of counting incarcerated people as residents of the districts in which their correctional facilities are located is imperative to increasing the representativeness of Connecticut’s General Assembly. The counting of incarcerated persons, the vast majority of whom cannot vote, as members of the legislative districts in which their carceral facilities are located affords inappropriate electoral power to said districts. Moreover, incarcerated persons who can vote must do so in the districts where they lived prior to incarceration. The status quo inaccurately invests legislative authority and exacerbates racial inequities in government, given that Connecticut districts housing correctional facilities have a far higher proportion of white voters than compared to local incarcerated populations.

The racial undertones of the current policy cannot be ignored. As the system stands, it disproportionately detracts from the power of minority communities, instead shifting their voice towards communities who do not necessarily share the same values or priorities. By counting incarcerated persons as residents of their home districts—where, again, they are *actually*

voting—the state of Connecticut would be restoring a more equitable, and indeed truer, model of democracy.

Every Connecticutter deserves equal representation in the state legislature. I ask the committee to consider passing S.B. 753 to enshrine that same principle in law.

Sincerely,

Grayson Phillips
New Haven, CT